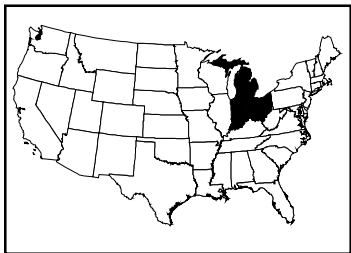


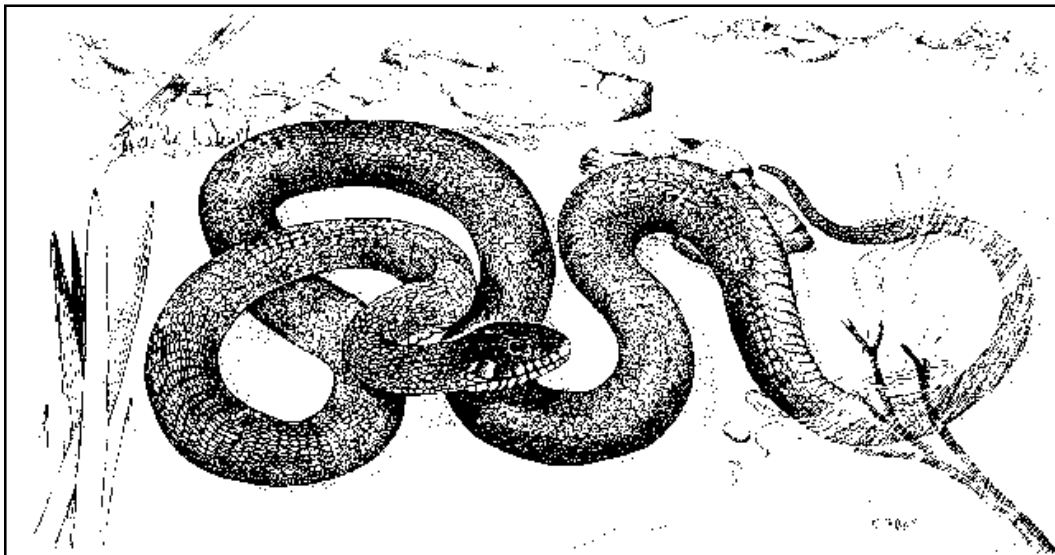


## Endangered Species Facts

# Copperbelly Water Snake



States in which the federally threatened population of the copperbelly water snake is found.



The copperbelly water snake is listed as a *threatened species*. Threatened species are animals and plants that are likely to become endangered in the foreseeable future. *Endangered species* are animals and plants that are in danger of becoming extinct. Identifying, protecting, and restoring endangered and threatened species is the primary objective of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's endangered species program.

### What is the Copperbelly Water Snake?

**Scientific Name** - *Nerodia erythrogaster neglecta*

**Appearance** - The snakes have a solid dark (usually black) back with a bright orange-red belly. They grow to 3 to 5 feet in length. They are not poisonous.

**Habitat** - The snakes live in lowland swamps or other warm, quiet waters. Upland woods are used as winter hibernation sites.

**Reproduction** - Young snakes are born in the fall near or in the winter hibernation site. The average litter size is 18 young.

**Feeding Habits** - The snakes feed on frogs, tadpoles, crayfish, and small fish.

**Range** - The population of copperbelly water snakes that live in southern Michigan, northeastern Indiana, and northwestern Ohio has been listed as threatened. Another population of copperbellies live in southwestern Indiana and adjacent Illinois and Kentucky, and southeastern Indiana. That population is **not** listed as threatened, but is protected by conservation agreements with State Departments of Natural Resources, various other State agencies, and coal companies.

## Why is the Copperbelly Water Snake Listed as Threatened?

**Habitat Loss or Degradation** - The snakes have declined mainly because of the drainage and filling of their lowland swamp habitat and clearing of adjacent upland woods where they spend the winter (hibernation sites).

**Collection** - Copperbelly water snakes are collected fairly regularly because of their rarity, large size, unique color, and value in the pet trade. Under the Endangered Species Act, collection is illegal without a permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

**Predation** - During migration, snakes are vulnerable to predation, especially when their migration routes are interrupted by cleared areas such as roads, mowed areas, and farmlands.

## What Is Being Done to Prevent Extinction of the Copperbelly Water Snake?

**Listing** - The copperbelly water snake was added to the U.S. List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants on February 28, 1996. The population that was listed as threatened occurs in southern Michigan, northeastern Indiana, and northwestern Ohio. The population that occurs in southern Illinois, southern Indiana, and western Kentucky was not listed but has been protected by conservation agreements.

**Recovery Plan** - The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is preparing a recovery plan that describes actions needed to help the snake survive.

**Research** - Researchers are and will continue studying the copperbelly water snake to find the best way to manage for the snake and its habitat.

**Habitat Protection** - Where possible, the snake's habitat (lowland swamps and adjacent upland woods) will be protected and improved. Conservation Agreements have been signed with the Illinois, Indiana, and Kentucky Departments of Natural Resources, other States agencies, and a number of coal companies as a means of protecting and enhancing habitat for the copperbelly in the southern portion of its range.

**Public Education** - Public education programs will be developed to raise awareness of the snake's plight.

## What Can I Do to Help Prevent the Extinction of Species?

**Learn** - Learn more about the copperbelly water snake and other endangered and threatened species. Understand how the destruction of habitat leads to loss of endangered and threatened species and our nation's plant and animal diversity. Tell others about what you have learned.

**Join** - Join a conservation group; many have local chapters.

**Protect** - Copperbellies need wetlands with good water quality. Protect water quality by minimizing use of lawn chemicals (i.e., fertilizers, herbicides, and insecticides), recycling used car oil, and properly disposing of paint and other toxic household products.